Gender Roles in Early America
What are Gender Roles?

- What is gender?
- What are gender roles?
- How do gender roles change from when you are a kid and when you are an adult?
Pre-Colonial Society (before Europeans came to this land)

- People have been living in what is now the USA for a very long time.
- Native Americans had societies here long before Columbus and other Europeans came here.
- These societies had their own kinds of gender roles, and their own definitions of what “family” meant.
Virginia Powhatan Tribe

- In this *indigenous* tribe, women and men played different roles, **but were treated the same**. Women and children would tend to farming, clothing making, and cooking. Men would hunt, fish and make canoes.

- Some duties were everyone’s responsibility, for example raising children, and everyone was expected to know how to use a canoe.
Virginia Algonquian Tribe

- In this *indigenous* tribe, men and women were viewed as equal, but had opposite roles.

- **Women** were viewed as givers of life, while men were viewed as takers of life. Women were in charge of farming, and maintain households.

- **Men** were in charge of hunting, and were warriors. Political power, ancestry, and property were passed through the female line.
Early English Colonial Gender Roles

- *Patriarchy*- A society where men have the power and lead the household.
- The gender roles of the English colonists were much more rigid than native tribes
- **Men** made all the legal decisions while property and lineage were determined by the man’s family. Men took care of farming
- **Women** did work inside the home and did not own land
Early English Colonial Gender Roles

- To “be a man” in colonial society you were supposed to-
  - Be educated
  - Own property
  - Participate in government

- To “be a woman” you were supposed to-
  - Maintain household order
  - Support good morals and faith
  - Help men
  - Have children
Religion’s Role

- Religion played a major role in colonial society, especially for gender roles and expectations.
- In many colonial societies they used the Christian Bible as justification for oppressing women.
- However, some of the Northern colonies, like Pennsylvania, gave women a little more freedom than others. The Quaker religion allowed women to speak at religious gatherings.
When People Broke the Rules

- When women did not follow the strict gender roles in English colonies, there was often punishment.

- In many cases the punishment was social rather than legal. People who broke the rules were often chastised, shamed, or shunned.

- However, there were also legal punishments. Women who broke gender roles were sometimes banished, or labeled as “witches”.
Anne Hutchinson

- One famous example of a woman who broke gender roles was **Anne Hutchinson**. She could be described as one of the first American feminists!
- She lived in the Massachusetts Bay Colony which practiced Puritan beliefs. **In the Puritan religion, women are not allowed to speak in church, or preach.**
Anne Hutchinson

- Anne preached her own interpretation of the Bible, and said she spoke directly to God.
- The men of the colony did not approve of her bravery so she was exiled from the Massachusetts Bay Colony.
STORYBOARD TIME
How Is Gender Different Today?

- How were your stories similar? How were they different?
- What are some gender roles you see today?
- What are some gender stereotypes we see today?
- What does a family look like today?
- How are these different than early Colonial America?
- Why do gender roles change?

How do you think gender roles will change in the future?